

removes barriers to housing affordability and encourages homeownership for low and moderate-income Americans.

H.R. 5640 incorporates much of H.R. 1776, a comprehensive housing bill that I cosponsored and which House passed overwhelmingly in April 2000 with my support. The most far-reaching provision of this bill would extend down payment assistance to low and moderate income families, under the Section 8 Program. Specifically, H.R. 5640 would vest local housing authorities with the power to provide a single grant for down payment assistance in the purchase of a home, moving families who receive Section 8 housing rental assistance into the realm of "homeowners". I support H.R. 5640 because it not only broadens the availability of affordable housing choice for many deserving American families, it also removes the disincentives to the production and availability of affordable housing programs.

H.R. 5640 provides for the establishment of a FHA down-payment formula by which lenders and borrowers calculate the amount of down-payment required for an FHA loan, dramatically improving the operation of the Federal Housing Administration's single-family program. This technical correction improves FHA administrative efficiency and provides the home buying industry and their customers a readily comprehensible tool for calculating the down-payment for an FHA loan.

As a member of the House Banking Committee, I strongly support provisions in H.R. 5640 that will make technical corrections and clarifications to the Homeowners Protection Act. This law ensures that homeowners have the right to cancel their Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI) on their home mortgages once the homeowner attains a certain level of equity in the home (usually 22%, but in some cases 20%). This measure clarifies that PMI cancellation rights for adjustable rate mortgages (ARMs) are based on the amortization schedule that is currently in effect. This provision ensures that consumers get full benefit of any adjustments that have been made based upon recent calculations. Moreover, under this provision, consumers with a "good payment history" will be given the explicit right to cancel their PMI, removing any existing ambiguity about this term. I strongly believe that these corrective provisions improve consumer protections and substantially improve the Homeowners Protection Act.

With respect to consumer protections, H.R. 5640 would provide elderly homeowners with additional measures to refinance their reverse mortgages while establishing protections to shield them from fraud and abuse. I am pleased that senior citizens in Texas' 25th District, who have only recently been given the "green light" from HUD to take out reverse mortgages, would be allowed to refinance these federally-insured home equity conversion mortgages under this provision of H.R. 5640. This provision would enable seniors to obtain loans up to the higher FHA loan limits, enacted in 1998. I am also pleased that this measure orders HUD to prohibit broker fees, limit origination fees for refinanced reverse mortgages and, in cases where loan proceeds are used for the costs of long-term medical care insurance, instructs HUD to waive the up-front mortgage insurance premium.

As the Ranking Democrat on the House Budget Committee's Housing and Infrastructure Task Force, I am especially pleased to support this legislation because it includes a section dealing with prevention of fraud in the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) 203(k) home acquisition and rehabilitation program. I have been working on this specific issue for several years, and with the assistance of my colleague RICK LAZIO, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) agreed to review and investigate HUD's Title I program in 1998. The Title I program, the oldest government housing program, provides low-income homeowners with government backed loans of up to \$25,000 to finance personal home repairs, with the money distributed directly to the contractor. I know of too many cases where unscrupulous contractors have targeted low-income homeowners, convinced them to take out large home repair loans, and then failed to perform the contracted work.

As a Congressman from the Houston area, this issue has particular resonance. In recent years, several investigative news reports in Houston have uncovered cases where unscrupulous contractors used this government's guaranteed FHA loan program to defraud homeowners in and around my district. Many of these homeowners are elderly and live on fixed incomes and had been the victim of shady contractors who provided shoddy or incomplete work. Many of these elderly homeowners were forced into default, and the taxpayers were left holding the bill. I am pleased that this legislation includes important provisions to strengthen the anti-fraud provision in the guaranteed FHA program.

Finally, with all that is good in H.R. 5640, I am, however, disappointed that it abandons a key provision of H.R. 1776 which would make available a 1% down FHA mortgage loan for qualified teachers, police, fire fighters and municipal employers when purchasing a home in the community they serve. Congressional Budget Office estimates show that, over a five-year period, this provision would provide 125,000 new loans, helping rebuild and strengthen neighborhoods.

I urge my colleagues to open and expand the opportunity of homeownership by supporting this important bi-partisan legislation.

#### TRIBUTE TO LARS-ERIK NELSON

##### HON. PETER T. KING

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2000

Mr. KING. Mr. Speaker, together with so many Americans—particularly New Yorkers—I was deeply saddened by the tragic and untimely passing of Lars-Erik Nelson. Lars was a uniquely gifted journalist of unsurpassed integrity and courage.

I will be eternally grateful that I was able to call Lars my friend—for he was a friend in every sense of the word. Whether it was discussing the issues of the day, demonstrating concern for someone else's health problems or giving an encouraging word, Lars was always there.

Although he had every right to do so, Lars never took himself seriously. Very simply, it

was always a delight to be in his company. When my wife Rosemary was in Washington, she and I would enjoy getting together with Lars and his wife Mary for dinner. Lars was raconteur, gourmet and wine connoisseur. What better way could there be to spend an evening? Just several days before he died, Lars and I were trying to schedule dinner in the upcoming week. It was not meant to be.

I will cherish personal memories of Lars. Sitting with him at my first Gridiron Dinner. Meeting with him and Gerry Adams in Washington during a key moment in the Irish Peace Process. Having lunch with him in the House Dining Room and listening to his calm reflections during the impeachment debate. His writing an overly complimentary blurb for a novel I wrote.

But mostly I will remember a man who was a true giant as a journalist and a friend—a man of innate decency. A man who will be sorely missed by any who had the opportunity to know him.

May he rest in peace.

#### TRIBUTE TO BOB MURPHY

##### HON. JOHN A. BOEHNER

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 7, 2000

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Bob Murphy, publisher of the Hamilton Journal-News, of Hamilton, Ohio, the largest newspaper in my District.

For more than four decades, Bob has been in the business of keeping citizens informed about what's happening in their community, country, and the world around them. He has been in the newspaper business for more than 42 years and has been publisher of the Journal-News since January 1, 1994. Before that, he was publisher of the Middletown Journal, another newspaper in the 8th District, from October 1981 through December 1993, when he was appointed to his current post.

Before coming to Middletown in 1981, Bob had been publisher of the Times-West Virginian in Fairmont, West Virginia, for three years. Before that, he had been general manager of the Dominion-Post in Morgantown, West Virginia, for six years.

Bob started in the newspaper business in the late 1950s in his hometown, Bayonne, New Jersey, with the Bayonne Times. He worked there for 13 years, seven of them as vice president and general manager.

Educated in local schools in Bayonne, Bob went on to Cornell University on a Teagle Scholarship. He graduated with a degree in economics and later received an MBA in personnel administration from New York University.

He served in the Army for two years, most of that time in Munich, Germany, with the Counter Intelligence Corps. Bob and his wife, Mary Jane, have six children.

I have known Bob Murphy for a long time. You always know where you stand with him—a trait that has won my respect and that of countless others during his long career. Bob's commitment to bringing the news accurately, fairly, and comprehensively is reflected in the legacy of success he leaves behind. I am honored to stand before the House today to pay